



# Past and Present

Newsletter of The Southern Genealogist's Exchange Society  
December 2019

[www.sgesjax.org](http://www.sgesjax.org)

---

## Quote of the month

"If you don't recount your family history, it will be lost. Honor your own stories and tell them too. The tales may not seem important, but they are what binds families and makes each of us who we are."-- Madeleine L'Engle

## Genealogy detectives at the SGES Library

HT-1 The Handybook for Genealogists, United States of America, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition published by Everton Publishers, Draper, UT. This 880 page book holds a wealth of information that is helpful to any researcher. Categories include: societies & repositories, bibliography & record sources as well as many other sources. An invaluable section lists all the counties in each state, when they were created and what county the new one was pulled from. Numerous foreign countries are also included.

## Announcements

The 10<sup>th</sup> Annual North Florida Genealogy Conference will be held Saturday, March 14, 2020 at the Church of Christ Latter Day Saints, 461 Blanding Blvd, Orange Park. As is the custom, there will be multiple classes to choose from about various topics. Keep checking the website <https://nfgenealogyconference.org/> for list of day's events and registration instructions. Walk-ins will be accepted the day of the conference but those persons will not be guaranteed lunch.

SGES was recently notified of the passing of Life Member Tanya Layne Massie in December 2018. Born in Ironton, Ohio, she enjoyed family genealogy research with her brother Jim Layne.

**Genealogy Cruise:** Nationally known genealogists, Dick Eastman, Diana Crisman Smith and (our own) Ann Staley, will be hosting a seven night cruise 19 Jul to 26 July, 2020. Traveling roundtrip from Cape Liberty, NJ (NYC metro) to Bermuda, there will be more than 20 hours of discussion and learning. Also available will be networking and one-on-one opportunities. See <https://www.cecruisegroups.com/2020-genealogy-cruise.html> for more details including pricing.

## Story of the month

**MATTIE O. MOORE: LIVING LEGACY, ELEGANT LADY OF THE SOUTH**  
by Peter P. Mullen (reprinted with permission)

I am so proud to have been granted an interview by Mrs. Mattie O'Steen Moore on February 18, 2019. I met with Mattie at her home where she now lives with her son Joseph Moore and his wife Donna Higginbotham Moore in Nassau County Florida. Mattie is now 98 years old and she was eager and willing to share her life story as part of the Nonagenarian, Living Legacy Series.

My name is Mattie O'Steen Moore. I was born December 21, 1920 out in the country of Coffee County, Georgia. My parents were Bryant Franklin O'Steen and Maggie Jane Williams. My Grandfather was Jonathan O'Steen and my Grandmother was Mary Ann Dickerson. My parent's grandparents and other family members moved from Clinch County to Coffee County in their early years. I am the only one left of 11 children of which 9 lived to have families of their own.

I was schooled in a little county school with only two rooms at first. Another room was added later as the school had burnt down sometime earlier and was slowly being rebuilt. We all walked to school and carried our lunches. The school was warmed by a wood heater and we drank water from the well; there was no electricity in the country in those days. Times were pretty hard in the 20's and 30's. Most folks refer to those days as the Hoover Days as President Hoover was in office. After Roosevelt came to be president, things began to improve, but then the war came. Most of the men and boys were gone to the service, or to ship factories or other factories making things for the war effort. Many women and girls also worked in these factories. Those who were left at home, worked together and helped each other. Some of my earliest memories are standing on a wooden crate washing dishes because I was still too young to cook. I remember going to the rail yard watching the rail road cars being loaded with cattle, fruits and vegetables.

I met my future husband when I was working at a tobacco plant in Douglas. He went to New York with the Civilian Conservation Corp or "Roosevelt's Tree Army" and helped build ski trails up there. He wrote me a letter while he was gone and when he returned we started seeing each other. In 1938, I married Wilbur (Bill) Chapman Moore and we were farmers for several years. After farming, Bill did other work and I kept a day care in my home for several years.

We raised six of our own children of which two are still living. We had ten grandchildren, thirteen great grandchildren and nine great, great grandchildren with another great grandchild on the way. Our oldest son was killed in Vietnam in 1967. We lost two with cancer and one with heart problems. I also lost two grandchildren and two daughter-in-laws. My next to the oldest son, Jimmy Ray Moore, lives in Rome, New York; he is now 77 years old. He was in the air force there and met the love of his life and they raised two children. He now has four grandchildren and one great grandchild. I now live in Nassau County Florida with my youngest son Joe and his wife Donna. They have two children and one grandchild with another one on the way. There are currently four generations living on this land.

While growing up, cotton was our cash crop, but the bowl-weevil destroyed alot of it. My entire family picked cotton by hand and sometimes we even had hired help. Cotton sold for five cents per pound and people worked for 50 cents to one dollar per day. Momma made quilts out of the leftover scrap cotton. Today, the cotton harvesting machines leave too much cotton on the plants. My Dad would not have approved, for sure.

I really had a busy life in those days. I did sewing, home day care, housework and farm work and all that keeps you busy, especially if you got kids. Our house was always a welcome place to family and friends. We helped raise the child of my younger brother when his wife died, so I had a busy, busy life without working outside my home.

A typical day began at 4:00am when me and my dad milked the cows by a kerosene lantern. My Brothers would feed the pigs, horses, and cattle and was all done before daylight. Then momma and my sisters would fix breakfast and my brothers went to the fields to work while me and daddy hoed the garden. This was seven days a week – no holidays for us in those days.

I completed the 8<sup>th</sup> grade and then went to Coffee County High School, but momma needed help at home, so I left school before graduating. I got married in 1938 and we moved to a farm in Irwin County in 1942. My husband had a stroke in 2001 and died at age 86. I lived there alone until 2018. My health was still good, but my doctor said I should consider moving to a nursing home or move in with family. I still had a vegetable and flower garden and chickens but I miss my garden more than anything now.

My husband loved to fish and we would have old fashioned family fish fries on the Satilla River. We fixed the fried fish along with hush puppies, coleslaw, fried sweet potatoes and desserts.

We also had cane grinding socials, made syrup and learned how to do the candy pullin. Everyone had large family communities back in those days.

Life had its ups and downs; when folks got sick, there wasn't always a doctor around; Neighbors and family died of typhoid fever, measles, and diphtheria. Since we didn't have drug store medicines, alot of herbal medicines were used. Many folks had also died during the 1918 Spanish Flu, and I remember my parents talking about it, but that was before my time.

I like to travel by car or train I have been to Georgia, Florida, South Carolina, North Carolina and New York. I don't like to fly. I once had a friend who was a medical transport pilot and offered to take me for a ride. I said "*No, I don't trust flying and I don't like to get on a boat either*" so that was the end of that!

I still have fond memories of my childhood days. I remember when I was 10 years old, we had a tobacco barn raisen and afterwards a big country meal fixed by the wives. I used to like to watch the men load timber, turpentine, and water melons and they would always let us kids carry home any of the broken melons. Our farm was only a few miles away from where Jefferson Davis was captured near Irwinville, Georgia on May 10, 1865. Today there is a park maintained by the United Daughters of the Confederacy and the Sons of Confederate Veterans. I remember hearing the cannons and gun fires from the annual re-enactments. There is also a museum and crosses where soldiers were killed.

My favorite foods today are fresh garden vegetables, chicken and dumplins and sweet potatoes. I reckon my favorite desserts are still lemon and pineapple cake, fruit cakes, pecan pie and of course homemade Georgia peach ice cream.

I am still a member of the Irwinville Baptist Church where I taught Sunday school and bible school for 50 years. I enjoy attending the monthly meetings of the West Nassau Genealogy Society in Callahan, Florida and am so grateful to my family friend and neighbor Dot Higginbotham for providing the transportation. I gave up my Georgia driver's license last year in 2018 at the age of 97 and no longer have my red Ford pickup truck. Now I have a Florida ID card instead.

I am Mrs. Wilbur Chapman Moore, Mattie O'Steen Moore. I have reviewed this article prior to publication, and to the best of my 98 years of recollection, everything is accurate. (Editor's notes: Nonagenarian definition: a person who is 90 to 99 years old. Happy 99<sup>th</sup> Birthday to Mattie on December 21, 2019)

### **Website**

Noted Genealogist researcher/author Thomas MacEntee has made available to the public, free access to his "Genealogy Do-Over" program. This is a project-based initiative to improve genealogy research skills while having fun too. Although started in 2018, it is still applicable in 2019.

To wrap up the year's Do-Over see <https://abundantgenealogy.com/genealogy-do-over-month-12-december-2018/> ©2018, copyright Thomas MacEntee. Used with permission.

### **New additions to the SGES Library**

FL-572 "Anna Madgigine Jai Kingsley—African Princess, Florida Slave, Plantation Owner" by Daniel L Schafer

FH-1316 "Huellas & Footprints—A Family's Journey & Historical Reference" edited by Jose' I Ramirez

TN 112 "Washington County Historical Speeches 1987-1988" edited by Mildred S Kozsuch